

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 131033Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 0512

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: JANUARY 30 REFERENDUM POSTPONED TO FEBRUARY 27

REF: A. MANILA 0306

B. MANILA A-10 OF JAN. 13, 1975

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN NATIONALLY BROADCAST SPEECH TO NATION EVENING JANUARY 12, PRESIDENT MARCOS POSTPONED REFERENDUM FROM JANUARY 30 TO FEBRUARY 27 OSTENSIBLY TO GIVE PEOPLE ADDITIONAL TIME "TO STUDY ISSUES". HE HAS DIRECTED COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS (COMELEC) WITH HELP OF NEW STUDY COMMITTEE (COM-PRISED OF MARCOS LOYALISTS) TO CONSIDER REVISING, DELETING OR ADDING TO QUESTIONS HE PROMULGATED JANUARY 7. MOST PLAUSIBLE EXPLANATION OF POSTPONEMENT DECISION IS PRESIDENT'S DESIRE TO REFINE QUESTIONS SO THERE NO POSSIBILITY OF AMBIGUITY AND ASSURE CRITICS AT HOME AND ABROAD THAT VOTERS HAVE AMPLE OPPORTUNITY STUDY REFERENDUM QUESTIONS. PARADOXICALLY, POSTPONEMENT COULD HAVE EXACTLY OPPOSITE EFFECT AND MERELY
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CONFIRM SUSPICIONS OF HIS CRITICS THAT MARCOS IS ANXIOUS

INSURE REFERENDUM RIGGED BEYOND PERADVENTURE OF DOUBT. DESPITE THIS DILEMMA, MARCOS HAS APPARENTLY CALCULATED POSTPONEMENT PREFERABLE TO KEEPING TO ORIGINAL JANUARY 30TH DATE. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT MARCOS SPOKE TO NATION ON REFERENDUM EVENING JANUARY 12 AFTER BUSY DAY OF CONSULTATIONS WITH COMELEC, FORMER CONGRESS MEMBERS, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS SECTORS NATIONAL LIFE. IN SPEECH, INTERWOVEN WITH GENERAL AND SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO UNPRECEDENTED NATURE OF WORLD CRISIS AND NEED FOR "CRISIS GOVERNMENT" TO COPE WITH THIS PHENOMENON, MARCOS ANNOUNCED HE WAS POSTPONING JANUARY 30 REFERENDUM TO FEBRUARY 27. PRESIDENT SAID THIS WOULD PROVIDE VOTERS GREATER OPPORTUNITY STUDY ISSUES AND ALSO PERMIT MAXIMUM REGISTRATION OF VOTERS, DISTRIBUTION OF REFERENDUM DISCUSSION MATERIALS, ETV. MARCOS ALSO ANNOUNCED CREATION SPECIAL STUDY COMMITTEE TO WORK WITH COMELEC ON REVISING REFERENDUM QUESTIONS (REF A), AND ADD OR DELETE SOME QUESTIONS. COMMITTEE INCLUDES FORMER SEN. TOLENTINO, FORMER SPEAKER VILLAREAL, LAGUNA GOVERNOR SAN LUIS AND CON CON DELEGATE GIBERTO DUAVIT (MARCOS' BAG-MAN DURING CONCON); ALL MARCOS LOYALISTS

3. ON MARTIAL LAW, MARCOS SAID LEADING CONSTITUTIONALISTS HAVE SUGGESTED COMELEC WITHDRAW QUESTION SINCE SUPREME COURT HAS RULED "ONLY PRESIDENT MAY DETERMINE NECESSITY OF MARTIAL LAW OR WHEN IT CEASES TO BE NECESSARY." PRESIDENT STATED NATION COULD NOT AFFORD "VAGUENESS AND AMBIGUITY ON THIS QUESTION SINCE THIS WOULD DIVIDE PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT SURMOUNT CRISIS IF DIVIDED." HE INDICATED THAT WHILE MARTIAL LAW HIS PREROGATIVE ALONE, HE ALSO HAD RIGHT TO CONSULT "THE SOVEREIGN WILL ON THE EXERCISE OF HIS EXTRAORDINARY POWERS ." PRESIDENT MADE PATENTLY CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT SUCCESS OF CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENT IN CRISIS AHEAD REQUIRED CONTINUATION OF MARTIAL LAW.

4. PRESIDENT SAID THAT THERE WERE SUGGESTIONS QUESTION ON INA BE REPHRASED. HE FELT THIS NEEDED "LEGAL STUDY". ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT, PRESIDENT STATED NO MATTER HOW STRONG

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THE PRESIDENT, GOVERNMENT SUFFERS IF LOCAL LEADERSHIP "FEEBLE AND INDIFFERENT TO REFORM". LOCAL GOVERNMENT MUST "BE THE OBEDIENT PURVEYOR OF DECISIONS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS, APART FROM BEING THE FAITHFUL IMAGE OF THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP".

5. COMMENT: PRESIDENT'S SUDDEN POSTPONEMENT OF REFERENDUM TO FEBRUARY 27 INDICATES HIS DESIRE FOR UNQUESTIONED POSI-

TIVE RESULTS HAS OVERCOME HIS INITIAL RESOLVE FOR QUICK, SNAPPY REFERENDUM. PRESIDENT'S ORIGINAL DECISION ON REFERENDUM AND TIMING PROBABLY NOT DISCUSSED WITH ADVISORS. WHEN DECISION MADE AND ADVISORS POINTED OUT PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN KEEPING TO ORIGINAL TIMETABLE, MARCOS APPARENTLY AGREED WITH ARGUMENT THAT ADDITIONAL MONTH WOULD: A) ALLOW SMOOTHER REFERENDUM FROM LOGISTICAL STANDPOINT, B) PERMIT USEFUL REFINEMENT OF REFERENDUM QUESTIONS AND C) COUNTER CRITICISM AT HOME AND ABROAD ORIGINAL REFERENDUM TIMETABLE SO TIGHT IT MADE EXERCISE MEANINGLESS. MARCOS FACED DILEMMA, HOWEVER, SINCE EFFORT TO REFINE QUESTIONS AND INSURE SMOOTHER FUNCTIONING REFERENDUM MAY WELL BUTTRESS HIS CRITICS. ARGUMENT THAT REFERENDUM OFFERS SEMBLANCE NOT SUBSTANCE OF DEMOCRACY. APPARENTLY MARCOS CONCLUDED RISKS INVOLVED IN TOO HASTY A REFERENDUM (ON JAN 30TH) OUTWEIGHTED ANY POSSIBLE ADVANTAGE AND OPTED FOR FEB. 27. SULLIVAN

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